

Appendix

- Two policies from Seattle’s Housing Affordability and Livability Agenda (HALA)—the groundbreaking first-ever comprehensive set of strategies to address housing affordability in Seattle—underscore limitation in the tools we have as a city to adequately address the housing affordability crisis we’re facing. Since HALA policy recommendations were released in 2015, the City got to work in earnest on two of the foremost high-impact policies, ADU reforms and Mandatory Housing Affordability (MHA). Nearly five years later, these policies have yet to be fully implemented, even as our housing affordability crisis worsens.
- In the case of our ADU reforms, work began in 2015 to conduct engagement and craft policy, with the goal of passing legislation in the summer of 2016. The legislation would have eased restrictions on backyard cottages and in-law units—which had been legalized in Seattle’s single-family neighborhoods since 2009, but had yielded only 221 ADUs since. The 2016 legislation could have produced between an estimated 4,000 and 6,000 ADUs over 20 years. In early 2016, a small group of residents challenged the environmental review, and a ruling was issued at the end of that year, requiring the City to complete a full EIS. Upon completion of that environmental review nearly two years later in October 2018, the same small group of residents promptly appealed. Now, with an appeal still pending, we hope to pass a stronger piece of legislation than was introduced in 2016 in the summer of this year, four years since work began. We are also working to make sure low-income homeowners have access to resources to build ADUs on their properties and to ensure that low-income renters have access to these housing options.
- Another recent example comes from MHA, Seattle’s version of inclusionary zoning, which would require new multifamily and commercial development to contribute to affordable housing through a fee payment to the City’s Office of Housing or on-site construction of affordable homes, in exchange for increased capacity to build granted through zoning changes in all of Seattle’s urban villages. Although decades of advocacy in the making, work began to craft this policy in 2014. Policy to implement the program across the city was developed over the course of the next two years, including hundreds of community meetings. The final EIS was released in November 2017, which was appealed by a small group of residents largely comprised of homeowners. A ruling was issued a year later, finding that the FEIS is adequate, with additional work needed for analysis of historic sites. Full implementation of MHA is set for a vote on March 18, 2019—five years since the policymaking process began.